

Washington, DC - In a major milestone, Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today secured the approval of \$485.2 million from the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense for Lockheed Martin in Owego, New York to continue its development of a new presidential helicopter fleet. The congressman, who is a member of the subcommittee, has been working tirelessly for months to obtain the funding needed to continue the much-needed project for which the Pentagon recently issued a stop work order.

The funds, which would be used to continue the research, development, and testing of Lockheed Martin's Increment 1 helicopter, VH-71A, are included in the fiscal year 2010 Defense Appropriations bill. While there are several legislative steps that the bill needs to go through before the funding for the helicopter is officially allocated, securing the approval of the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee is considered the most critical part of the process. Final approval of the funding would result in the restoration of most, if not all, of the recently announced job cuts associated with the development of the presidential helicopter.

"It's taken a lot of hard work to get to this point, but funding for Lockheed Martin's presidential helicopter is back on track," Hinchey said. "My colleagues on the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense today flatly rejected the many false claims made about the VH-71 program. It's been clear all along that canceling the presidential helicopter project would be an enormous waste of taxpayer money and force the president to continue flying in an extremely old and outdated helicopter. By providing \$485.2 million for Increment 1, we will put people in Owego back to work building a state of the art presidential helicopter fleet that is badly needed. Providing continued funding for the VH-71 project is the most fiscally responsible step we can take to produce a much-needed helicopter fleet for the White House."

Hinchey has spent the last several months aggressively working to refute false claims about the cost of the presidential helicopter. Some have called for the current Lockheed Martin program to be scratched because of budget concerns and for a new program to be bid, which Hinchey has repeatedly noted would be far more costly than continuing the project that is already well underway. According to the Congressional Research Service, internal Navy documents estimate that a new presidential helicopter program would cost \$14-21 billion when factoring in the \$4 billion that would have been wasted on the canceled VH-71 program. Additionally, an estimated \$1.2 billion would be needed to maintain the fleet of helicopter that the White House currently uses.

Upon learning of plans to propose canceling the VH-71 program, Hinchey and several of his

House colleagues offered a proposal in March to President Obama that involved expanding Increment 1 of the helicopter project, which has already produced nine helicopters, including four test articles, that have undergone more than 800 hours of test flights, in lieu of moving onto Increment 2 -- the more costly and technically sophisticated phase of the project. By expanding the number of Increment 1 helicopters, it's estimated that the Navy could purchase a full fleet of 23 Increment 1 helicopters on-time and within the original budget plan. If the committee had rejected Hinchey's request for funding and the program was canceled, none of the helicopters that have already been constructed could be used, which would be a significant waste of taxpayer money.

Since then, Hinchey has worked closely with his colleagues in the House, particularly House Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense Chairman John Murtha (D-PA), to have funding included in the fiscal year 2010 spending bill that would effectively implement that proposed plan to expand Increment 1. The congressman thanked Murtha today for his leadership in ensuring that the funding for the Lockheed Martin helicopter would be included in the bill.

"Even a former commander of the presidential helicopter fleet has said a new fleet is badly needed to replace an outdated helicopter," Hinchey said. "Our country should not have its president flying around in a helicopter that was designed while President Eisenhower was in office. We've put men on the moon, developed the Internet, and digitalized everything from music to medical records in the time since the current fleet was designed. Funding the continued development of Increment 1 is the surest, quickest, and most fiscally responsible way to deliver a modernized helicopter to the White House. I'm extremely grateful to my colleagues on the subcommittee, particularly Chairman Murtha, for their support of this important program."

As part of his effort to demonstrate to his colleagues, as well as senior Navy and White House officials, that canceling the VH-71 program made no logical sense, Hinchey repeatedly pointed to the fact that scrapping the program now would waste approximately \$4 billion in taxpayer money -- \$3.3 billion already spent on the project as well as early termination fees that the Pentagon would owe Lockheed Martin.

The congressman has also repeatedly highlighted the dramatic need for a new presidential helicopter fleet. The current fleet of helicopters, which is being stripped down to reduce weight due to safety concerns, has technology that is more than a half century old and was constructed in the 1970's. It also lacks the modern communications equipment needed for the president to securely communicate with senior staff and administration officials on the ground. Further, the current fleet of helicopters has only 10 seats. With a first family of five that includes the president's mother-in-law, and a crew of five that includes Secret Service agents, there is no

room for senior staff to travel with the president, which is critical in coordinating information and instructions during national emergencies. Lockheed Martin's Increment 1 version of the new helicopter can seat 14 passengers, which would enable senior White House staff members to travel with the president and his family.

The Defense Appropriations bill now moves to the full House Appropriations Committee next week and is expected to come before the full House during the last week of July. Constitutionally, the House acts first on spending bills so the Senate now needs to take up its own version of the Defense Appropriations bill.